

**MINUTES
CITY OF BLOOMINGTON
COMMISSION ON SUSTAINABILITY**

Tuesday, September 9, 2008 6:00 p.m.
Hooker Room, City Hall, 401 North Morton Street

Roll Call:

Members Present: George Huntington, Jim Sherman, Paul Schneller, John Hamilton,
Christine Glaser, Laura Kamp, Toby Strout, Dave Rollo

Regrets: Cynthia Schultz, Steve Ashkin, Bob Bent

Staff Present: Adam Wason, Michael Leahey

Call to Order/Approval of Minutes:

The meeting was called to order at 6:03 pm. Christine Glaser corrected a quote from the August minutes. John Hamilton noted that the minutes should be changed to reflect Steve Ashkin's preference for a 'bottom-up' versus 'top-down' approach. John Hamilton introduced a new member, Laura Kamp.

Public Comment:

Caitlin Corner-Dolloff announced that she has come to Bloomington on behalf of OneStart, an environmental advocacy group. OneStart's mission is to engage both presidential candidates in Green Jobs, Green Economy, and No New Coal initiatives. She will be running a "Green Jobs Day of Action" march in Bloomington on September 27, starting at the Sample Gates and ending at the Library. She suggested that it could be an opportunity to get media attention and to have the BCOS involved. Adam Wason asked if anyone was opposed to co-sponsoring the event. There was no opposition to sponsoring the event.

Dave Rollo noted for the record that the City is moving faster than the University on Climate Change initiatives.

Announcements:

Christine mentioned that there are a number of Cut Your Carbon workshops coming up in early October. Adam added that they will be advertised in the next sustainability newsletter.

Paul suggested that, as IU has announced a Sustainability Initiative, BCOS should write a letter congratulating the initiative and offering to co-ordinate efforts. John and Adam will co-write the letter, sending it to IU President McRobbie and copying other decision makers.

George reminded the commission of the suggestion for a downtown recycling center posed during last month's meeting, and mentioned that, coincidentally, Chad Roeder, owner of Bloomington Pedal Power Recycling, is already taking the initiative in leasing space from Matt Murphy to open a new center. Toby Strout mentioned that a 'bike lending library' initiative is underway for her staff.

Dave announced that IU has cut back on its bus services due to increases in fuel prices. This affects the City as well, because IU subsidizes City bus services. He stated his opinion that it is out of line to offer multi-million dollar severance packages to sports coaches while eliminating public services. Toby suggested that a letter stating the commission's opposition to the cuts be sent to IU. John commented that he wasn't aware enough of the budget issues to have a strong

opinion on the cuts. George commented that IU should use this opportunity to encourage students to walk and ride bikes more. Dave commented that the Council is already writing a letter on the subject, and that BCOS could piggyback on it. This was generally agreed upon.

John opened the floor to determining an appropriate date for the BCOS retreat. Paul mentioned that the commission should schedule the retreat as soon as possible. October 18 is the upcoming date with most participants available. Adam will confirm facility location and availability.

Committee Reports

a. Sustainability Assessment Report

Adam reported that the SAR is ready to go, and asked for committee input on distribution strategy. The listserv will point to the link on the website. John wants 10 minutes on the agenda of an upcoming City Council meeting. Adam will work with Dan Sherman, City Council Attorney, to schedule it.

b. Initiatives

John commented that the Initiatives Committee lacks a Chair.

George asked whether the Patagonia grant had been submitted, which was inconclusive. Christine asked about 'Change a Light/ Change the World' campaign. George suggested asking Steve to continue pushing it on a facility level, and mentioned that one roadblock is the breakability of CFC bulbs. Jim commented that, from his informal observations, 95% of the public are ill-informed about proper disposal of the bulbs, and are simply throwing them in the garbage. He suggested that "catchy" recycling bins should be installed wherever the bulbs are sold. Paul mentioned working with Monroe County Solid Waste Management District.

Dave suggested an announcement in the utility bill announcing curbside pickup locations. Christine suggested sending an announcement with the Mayor's annual letter. George asked whether we continue to get tracking data on quantity of bulbs, but Adam replied that EnergyStar had not yet released the data. John mentioned that he has been working with the Water utility, and that they will be putting a notice in future bills comparing each household's usage to local benchmarks.

John mentioned the water treatment plant, and stated the BCOS position that conservation should be promoted alongside capacity expansion. He added that Bloomington is in a great position to be the first city in the state to use 'volume pricing', which could potentially lower the expenditure for low-income and low-quantity users. He commented that the best way to conserve is through the pricing mechanism. George cautioned the commission to be wary of unintended consequences, such as restaurants deciding to use disposable containers instead of washing dishes due to increases in water rates.

Jim suggested benchmarking other cities outside of Indiana so as not to "reinvent the wheel." Dave mentioned that it will take a change in the State legislature, but John did not believe that to be the case. Dave mentioned the Relative Contribution Consumption, and that the increase in demand is coming from outside the city from the wholesalers. He questioned the fairness of citizens being asked to subsidize sprawl. He then questioned how the plant will be powered in the event of an outage or disaster, and stated that he has asked the city for an analysis of the feasibility of using alternative energy to power the plant if systems fail.

Christine commented that she is not happy linking the volume-pricing initiative to the expansion, especially if the pricing can limit consumption and thus obviate the expansion. She asked for

clarification on the aforementioned topic of centralized vs. decentralized systems, and John replied that decentralized systems that cover metropolitan areas are more efficient. Dave commented that currently average usage is 50% of capacity, but that the debate is over building a buffer for peak demand.

John commented that Kelly Boatman from the Environmental Commission will meet with the Mayor on the proposed GHG emission letter.

Christine commented that an IU Geology professor could focus his students' class work on sustainability issues relative to the Commission; for example, the dynamics of land use in the face of population growth. There will be an Energy seminar on Monday at 7pm.

Paul is meeting with local representatives to determine how community healthcare can fit into the BCOS' initiatives. An example is combining multiple entities to form a single-payer entity, achieving improved bargaining power.

John mentioned that, since the merger vote, hospital employees are framing the issue as a location instead of as a governance issue, which is a change from the pre-vote rationale, and that the merger has the feeling of a done deal. He wondered whether it was the commission's role to look in to whether there are any further alternatives to keep the hospital downtown.

Discussion on Future Project Focus Areas:

Paul commented that it may not be appropriate to decide on the following year's projects before developing a conceptual guideline structure. He feels the BCOS' focus should be its policy advisory/ research/ consulting role, versus spending time discussing individual project areas.

Toby wondered when the larger, more abstract issues, such as the Mission Statement, will be discussed, if not at the retreat. John commented that the 'framing discussion' and 'project plan' were both on the table for the retreat, but that the discussion is on how much time to spend in each area. Toby suggested this meeting's focus should be on which questions to answer at the retreat, instead of the discussion of potential projects. John mentioned that the retreat could be structured to allow sufficient time for discussion on the framework, and then work forward to a review of projects. Jim reminded the commission that time will need to be spent with the Facilitator beforehand.

In discussing agenda items for the retreat, Dave asked how to better integrate the topic of social equity into the areas of environment and climate change. Paul asked how to better influence city policy and city practice. Christine suggested that Peak Oil be made a major focus. Dave added that anticipating higher energy costs and scarcity is critical, and ties-in to the social equity theme in that lower-income residents will be affected disproportionately by climate change. Dave commented that he attended an economic forum last week regarding the housing crisis, and mentioned that at this point no-one is certain what the local impact will ultimately be.

Jim commented that the committee needs something "sticky" to capture people's attention and achieve a psychological "tipping-point." Toby framed the topic as "creating the spirit of a crusade."

Christine commented that the energy sector issues are tied to the growth issue, raising the question of how we would react as a city/ society in the potential event of zero economic growth, and suggesting that the commission frame the issue of slowing growth as an opportunity for a more humane society.

Dave mentioned that the Environmental Commission authored a report on the cost of growth in terms of new residential development. He then commented upon the fallacy of growth-centric policy versus “steady-state” policies. Jim observed that the Bloomington economy keeps growing without an obvious increase in population.

John considered the notion of the “innovation economy” and asked what kinds of economies will be successful in the future. He also addressed the topic of appropriate strategy in framing the BCOS’ position to neighboring counties.

A speaker from the Environmental Commission suggested opening up the commission’s membership to county representatives.

Meeting was adjourned at 7:38 pm.

The next meeting of the BCOS will be held on October 14, 2008 in the Hooker conference room of City Hall at 6 pm.